

Emergency Preparedness – Planning Ahead

04/16/07

“It’s never gonna happen to me.” We’ve all said it, or at least thought it. “Tornadoes happen to other people.” “It’s just a couple inches of water – I can drive through that.” “Pandemic flu – that’s just something my grandma talks about.”

Last week we learned that we are all at risk – for natural disasters like severe weather, for terrorism and for public health emergencies. By admitting you are at risk, you have taken the first step to being better prepared.

The next step is to plan. Sit down with your family and identify the situations that might occur. Discuss all the steps your family will need to take in each situation, and then assign specific tasks to each person. One person could be responsible for turning off utilities, another for making sure fresh baby food is packed, another for loading the family pets in the car.

Write down your plan for evacuating your home. Identify several routes out of your neighborhood in case one is blocked. Set up a meeting place away from home. You may be separated from family members when the disaster strikes. Identify a person outside your neighborhood each one of you can call to provide information about how you are and where you are. This person can provide other family members with updates and help you all reunite at your family meeting place.

Create a plan for sheltering in place. Locate a safe, dry place in your basement or an internal room where you could shelter from a tornado or from a hazardous chemical leak. Pack enough emergency supplies to stay there for several hours or several days.

Write down medical information for each family member, such as weight, medications, medical conditions, and physician’s name and phone number. Keep this information with you at all times. Also, give a copy of your family plan to each family member to carry with them.

You’ve admitted you are at risk. Now it’s time to take the next step – plan ahead today. The time you spend now will help protect your family and might just save your lives.

For more information, visit www.dhss.mo.gov or call the Springfield-Greene County Health Department at (417) 864-1658.